

# CQSS2030

## CENTRAL QUEENSLAND Sustainability Strategy 2030

### THE CROPPING SECTOR

Central Queensland is experiencing profound change in industry, land use, community and climate. Planning allows us to capitalise on opportunities while managing risk.

The Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy (CQSS:2030) draws on the best available knowledge so we can work together to protect our natural assets: it's vital for our region's continued balanced growth.

CQSS:2030 will guide natural resource management decisions by identifying priority risks and proposing strategies for sustainable development. The strategy aims to collate the latest information, provide strategic direction and encourage governments, industry and the community to work together.

#### Cropping sector — key facts

The productive soils and rainfall of central Queensland support a significant cropping industry. The region has a seasonal market differentiation and is well supported by agricultural research facilities within and beyond the region. In 2010-11, over 800 growers cropped 617,000 ha (4 per cent of the region's land area).

The bulk of this is cereals: mostly wheat, sorghum, chickpeas, and, depending on the season, areas of barley, maize, sunflower and mung beans. The value of production for dryland cropping will vary significantly year to year depending on rainfall and

global market prices. The total gross value of broadacre cropping in 2012-13 was \$367M.

Cotton is grown in both irrigated and dryland systems (approximately 2:1 irrigated to dryland). In 2010-11, 95 cotton growers worked 41,000 ha. The total irrigated area in the Fitzroy (cotton and horticulture) is 35,000 ha. Irrigated cropping is largely based around Emerald and the Dawson-Callide water supply schemes. There are also pockets of irrigated cropping on the Mackenzie and Fitzroy rivers. Of the irrigated crops, cotton generates the greatest return. Irrigated arable land is generally valued at four times the price of dryland arable land.

There are grain storage facilities at Springsure, Gindie, Emerald, Capella, Clermont, Mt McLaren, Moura, Biloela and Dingo. There are cotton gins in Emerald, Yamala and Moura.

Cropping faces competition for land use with mining and coal seam gas and also urban expansion in the Central Highlands. Equally, irrigated cropping competes for water with both industry and urban consumers.

Future opportunities in broadacre cropping include:

- further irrigation development (depending on competing water uses) in the Dawson Valley and lower Fitzroy catchments
- provision of transport infrastructure such as cargo port facilities
- development of niche markets, such as oilseed crushing.

## Strategies for cropping sustainability

CQSS:2030 proposes strategies to protect and maintain central Queensland's natural assets. Many strategies are relevant to more than one sector.

As a significant land use in central Queensland, the dryland and irrigated cropping activities contribute to the health of our region's natural assets (Soils, Groundwater, Freshwater Rivers and Wetlands, Terrestrial Ecosystems, Coastal and Marine, and Climate and Air).

CQSS:2030 proposes the promotion of land and water best management practices that:

- maintain ground cover
- minimise risks of soil loss and degradation
- increase soil carbon
- prevent and minimise impacts of salinity
- minimise soil contamination
- improve soil physical, biological and chemical health
- restore degraded sites and manage vulnerable soils appropriately
- maintain or restore vegetation in areas of salinity risk.

For the protection of ground and surface waters, CQSS:2030 encourages water use efficiency and water management practices that reduce demand, manage salinity risk and avoid contamination. Practices that reduce sediment, nutrient and pesticide run-off to maintain water quality will benefit freshwater and downstream coastal and marine environments.

In terms of protecting biodiversity values, CQSS:2030 promotes practices that protect, maintain and restore high value ecosystems such as wetlands, riparian zones and groundwater-dependent ecosystems. In line with best practice, CQSS:2030 emphasises the connectivity between systems and the role of refugia that can harbour species in times of drought, flood or other stresses. Examples include permanent waterholes and vegetation remnants that are connected. Reducing barriers in aquatic systems improves resilience of aquatic and coastal systems.

Responding to climate change risks involves adapting to the changing conditions such as increased risk of flooding, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions directly or sequestering carbon. CQSS:2030 supports regional innovation and dissemination of practices that manage climate risks, reduce emissions or sequester greenhouse gases.

Key knowledge gaps identified in CQSS:2030 include a better understanding of groundwater systems, the role of refugia in terrestrial and aquatic systems, climate trends and implications, and understanding and managing cumulative impacts, particularly for ground and surface waters. Consistent with this, CQSS:2030 identifies the need for more integrated planning approaches to natural resource management.

## Want to know more?

Visit [www.cqss2030.com.au](http://www.cqss2030.com.au) for the complete strategies and objectives.